

A N
EPISTLE
T O
FRIENDS

Every where:

To be Distinctly Read in their
MEETINGS,
When Assembled together in the
Fear of the Lord.

By a Friend of Truth, and a Lover of Righteousness,
Katharine Whitton.

L O N D O N,
Printed for Benjamin Clark Bookseller in George-
yard Lombard-street. 1681.

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FRIENDS

Every where.

Dear Friends,

IN bowels of tender love to all Friends every where, am I constrained and pressed in Spirit to give forth this Testimony, under which I have lain for a long time bowed in Spirit, in a deep sense of the Fatherly care of our God over all his Lambs, and little ones, which he would gladly have all gathered unto him, that he might preserve them from the evil of the day which is approaching; for he hath shewed a terrible day near to break forth; yea, a day that will burn as an Oven, and all the proud, and they that do wickedly, will be as Stubble which cannot endure the Fire; for it will be as a stubble, and serve as a fire to consume the counterfeit Metall, and reprobate Silver; that the pure Gold may appear; yea, that the precious Sons and Daughters of Sion may come forth as Gold seven times tried, and shine in their Beauty and Lustre. For saith the Lord, *I will burn the Chaff with unquenchable fire, but the Wheat I will gather into my Garner.*

And Friends, this is no Reflection, but comes for discharging a duty, from one whom God in measure hath placed as on Sion's Walls; and who seeing the Sword come, dare not but give warning to such as are not upon the watch: For saith the Lord, *If they take no warning, if the Sword come and take them away, their blood shall be upon their own heads: But if thou do not warn them, if the Sword come and take any person from amongst them, they are taken away in their iniquity, but thy blood will I require at thy hands.* And

Friends, with many Tears and Cries unto the Lord have I been bowed down many a time, that I and every one whom God hath concerned may be clear of the blood of all: And that the House of Israel may be spoken to, least sin be upon us: For saith the Lord, *Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a Trumpet, show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin.* Yea it is a warning from the Almighty, to all and every one of the backsliders in Israel, and lukewarm ones, and careless daughters of Jerusalem, and Women at ease in Sion; yea an Alarm is sounded out of the Holy Mountain, that you may hear and be awakned to righteousness, and stirred up to holiness, to meet the Lord in the way of his pure Judgments; for woe will be to those that are at ease in that day that is a coming; yea the sinners in Sion must mourn, fear will overtake all the unfaithful and disobedient; yea terror will surprize the hypocrites, and woe and misery will be to all those, except they repent, for it is a warning in my heart unto all such from the Lord, that they may all turn unto him by true repentance, whose mercy is proffered, and observe his Commandments and do them, and keep Covenant with him, and see that every one be wise in heart, and travel in spirit, and make it their concern to bring glory unto the Lord in this his day; for he keeps Covenant with, and extends mercy unto them that love him and keep his Commandments, and he hears the Prayers of his own children, and hath heard them in every Age, and hath not forgot his word spoken by his Servants of old; where he saith, *If you transgress I will scatter you abroad amongst the Nations, but if you turn unto me and keep my Commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out into the uttermost parts of the heaven; yet will I gather you from thence, and will bring you into the place that I have chosen to set my Name there.* And surely Friends, we are the people for whom the Lord hath done great things, since the day that he hath opened our eyes, and let us see our miserable and wretched state, and the great need we had of him to help us out of that condition.

Oh! the many tears, with deep sighs and bitter groans in that day, can never be forgotten; and blessed be the Lord who hath heard the cries of the poor, and regarded the groanings of the needy, and hath met us in the way of his Judgments; and hath brought in the Ministration of Condemnation, which was glorious in its time, and placed it upon the head of the transgressor in us, whereby he

hath

hath judged and condemned the transgressing and rebellious part, that would not that he should reign, and in his infinite love, and bowels of tender compassion, which yearned towards his own pressed Seed, that groaned to be delivered, hath he ransomed and redeemed his own in measure, and led the same as he did *Israel* of old out of *Egypt* darkness, and from under *Pharaoh's* taskmasters, to sacrifice unto him, and praise him in the land of the living.

And my dear Friends, a remnant through Gods mercy can truly say, he hath visited us as with the day spring from on high; and are witnesses that refreshment from his presence is come; and though sorrow endur'd for the night, yet joy came in the morning, the day being dawn'd, and the morning Sun arisen; yea the Winter is now through mercy, with many far spent, and the storms in measure over, and the spring time come, and the singing of Birds, and the voice of the Turtle is heard in our land. O! the glorious day that is dawn'd upon us, where the morning Stars do sing together, and all the Sons of God do shout for joy. Oh! the wonderful works of our God, and the noble Acts that he hath done; he hath made us to see his wonders in the deep, and as *Israel* of old, to sing his praises: Oh his tender dealings can never be raced out of our remembrance, he hath printed them in our hearts, and his engaging love constraineth us to speak well of him, and to make mention of his Name, and speak of his loving kindness and tender mercies which endureth for ever!

And dear Friends, after all this and much more of the Lords dealing with us, and kindness and mercy bestowed upon us, hath the old adversary and enemy of mankind bestirred himself, who in every Age hath gone about to insnare the simple, as in *Israel* of old, when he prevailed over *Achan* to covet the wedge of Gold and the *Babylonish* Garment, for putting his hand to which, the whole Camp of *Israel* was troubled, until *Achan* was found, and *Babylon's* Stuff thrown out, and burnt without the Camp. And other some taking strange Wives, mixing with the Heathen, loving their Gold, and learning their ways; for which *Ezra* in his bitter Lamentations, plucked the Hair from his Head and Beard; and *Jeremiah* wished, that his Head were Waters, and his eyes a Fountain of Tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the Daughters of his people! And dear Friends, in our Age many hath been the temptations and allurements this enemy hath assaulted the children of the Lord with, some-

sometimes transforming himself as into an Angel of Light, to deceive if it were possible the very Elect; But blessed be the Lord who hath preserved a remnant out of his snares alive unto himself, yet hath he prevailed upon some, drawing them into divers disorders, whereby the worthy Name of the Lord hath been blasphemed, his precious Truth evil spoken of, and the simple insnared, to the sorrow of a remnant, and saddening the hearts of the righteous, which hath caused many tears and secret cries unto the Lord, that he would appear in his wisdom more and more, for his own glorious Names sake, and Truths sake, to preserve the simple, and frustrate the enemy of his end: And blessed be the Lord who still hears the cry of his own Seed, and being zealous of his own glory, hath appeared in his Faithful Messengers, to gather and encourage men and womens Meetings, whereby he is stopping the enemy in his progress, by placing judgment on his head, and condemnation to that part over which he rules; and in this work the Lord hath engaged Sons and Daughters, putting his spiritual Sword into their hands, for the beating down strong holds of sin, in which the mighty Prince of the power of darkness hath his place: neither dare they do this work negligently, or over-look, or connive at any of his practices, or proceedings, in whomsoever they appear, but in Truth, and Righteousness, judge and condemn the evil, under whatever pretence the same do appear, at which the evil one is troubled, and likes not this way, neither would be thus dealt with, but under pretence of Truth pleads for more liberty and freedom of Spirits, and so transforming himself to betray the simple, and defile the Temple of God, and sit as God, yet he is the Serpent, and he cannot save his head, for the Seed of the woman is brought forth, and a bringing forth, and the enmity is placed between the two Seeds, and her Seed must break his head; and he is now a receiving Blow, at which he rageth, and raileth against the work of the Lord, and the instruments he employeth: But the determination of the Lord is to dethrone him, and bring him down, and take his own possession, and reign in his own Temple, whose right it is to rule, and happy will all such be who in submission do meet him in the way of his Righteous Judgements, for they are always mixed with mercy, and they shall find it who submit unto him, but such as will not that he should reign, he will bring them to naught.

Therefore dear Friends, let us keep our Womens Meetings in Gods

pure

pore fear, and wait upon him to feel his power and heavenly wisdom, and that will allow of nothing whereby the worthy Name of the Lord is blasphemed, his precious Truth evil spoken of, or good Spirit grieved either in the particular or general, but by his power and wisdom it will be judged and disowned, without respect of persons, whether by words or actions, Meats, Drink or Apparel, let the pretence be what it will; neither can this sowe pillows under the arm-holes of any, nor speak peace to the wicked, nor heal the hurt of the Lords people deceitfully; but search the wound, and pour in the purgoyl, to the comfort of the wounded. That, that may be laised, which delights to do its Fathers will; and honour him in all things (127) both in life, practice and doctrine, that so in this holy life we may shine as Lights in the World, in Gods wisdom, having our Lamps trimmed, our Lights burning, and in our Censers the sweet Incense, which gives a good Savour both to God and man, having the Savoury Salt in us with which every word and action may be seasoned, that others seeing our holy lives, and good conversations may glorifie our heavenly Father.

And dear Friends, let no difference be, but in the unity of one Spirit: let's be a people of one heart and mind, serving the Lord with one consent, seeking his glory unanimously, working the work to which he hath called us; which work is to stop the enemies work (as I said before) in what pretence soever he come; for Friends, he will ask no more then to have footing amongst us, under pretence of Truth, putting a fair vizard on every action, calling pride decency, covetousness carefulness, Nicety and Curiosity in the forms of Meat, Drink, or other things, a point of good Housewifery; for every thing he will have a covering like Truth, that he may keep his Interest in the hearts of men and women, which is the principal part: But the Heir is brought forth which must take his Inheritance, and the true Light now shineth that discovers him in every action, not one corner he can shelter in where he is not seen, his coverings are all too narrow, the vail which he hath spread over him and his actions, must by the power of the Lord which is risen, and arising in the bosoms of a remnant, be rent in twain from the top to the bottom; so my dear Friends, whom God hath engaged, every one discharge your duty, be zealous for the Lord; and valiant for his Truth, and as the valiants of Israel, every one have on your Spiritual armour and weapons in readines, for wee will be to those who

who do the work of the Lord negligently, or with a careless mind; But they will with *Jaël* be blessed, who put their hand to the work, and their right hand to the Workmans hammer; to the wounding of *Israhels* enemy, for he must bow, yea he must fall, and Songs of Triumph over him, as in *Deborahs* days there must be: Therefore Friends, let us to the work, every one to the employment to which we are or have been called; and while the Light shineth that lets us see every Corner, let all that's unclean be rid, and swept out; yea let us make clean work, for to be truly arrayed in the White-Linen which is the righteousness of Saints, is very decent, and to have this house (to wit, our hearts and inward parts) clean swept; and all its furniture of righteousness set in good and comely order, in carefulness, is very commendable and consistent with good Housewifery too: And I do not doubt but those who are careful in the matters before mentioned, will not as to outward things come short (according to their abilities) in anything that is needful, necessary, comely, decent and of good report; as it is not fit they should exceed, so I hope they will not come behind; what may be of good example, and tend to edification, and to those things whereby Truth is honoured: So Friends let us be Faithful to the Lord, and careful over his household and family, not as the bad Servant, who smiteth his Fellow, but as the good Servant, giving them Meat in due season, Feeding the Hungry, Cloathing the Naked, Visiting the Sick, binding up the broken-hearted, healing the wounded, and let it be with *Gileads* Balm, and blessed shall all such be when their Lord cometh whom he shall find so doing; and greatly hath the presence of God to his praise appeared to the owning, carrying on and blessing of this his own work, and large hath been his love and Fatherly care over all Lambs and little ones, and very weighty is the work and great the concern, to strengthen the weak, and confirm the feeble, and gather all those that's scattered by the wiles of the enemy to him, that is and always was the ancient Rock and refuge of the righteous in every Age, that so, if possible, not one may be left behind, but all be gathered: And it is the travel of my Soul, and desire of my Spirit, that none of those may slight the day of their Visitation, whom the Lord hath in any measure touched, or that have had their faces turned *Sion* wards, but that they may be exhorted and admonished, and dearly intreated to halt unto the Lord, who long hath hovered over us, as sometime he did over *Jerusalem* of old, and fain would have

have all gathered under the shadow of his wings; that ever made mention of his Name; and many hath been his Warnings, and Invitations by his Servants and Messengers, and still he stands as with open arms, ready to receive all those that come unto him in humility of mind, and brokenness of heart. So dear Friends, let none slide in the World, its evil ways, vain Customs, or foolish fashions; be not partakers with them of their pleasures, lest such partake of their plagues; but be ye separated, *touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, saith the Lord*: so in this self-denying life, and by the ancient power by which we were gathered in the beginning, let us hasten with speed to our God, who is our refuge and sure hiding-place; for the Storm approacheth, and certainly will overtake the negligent & careless, who are gone from the Shepherd. So dear Friends, let no pains be spared, or means neglected, whereby the work so needful may be hastened, for it is Gods work, and not mans, though as I said before, it laid on the ancient and honourable in *Israel*, to put the work forward; for the Elders that rule well, are worthy of double honour, as the Apostle said, and also esteem them for their works sake. And as *Deborah* said, *my heart is towards the Governours of Israel*; and I can truly say, many a time when I have viewed in my mind their sufferings, tryals and tribulations they went through in the beginning, my heart hath been broken, and I have secretly said, *They have broken us a way through the Thickets, and trodden us a path through the Desarts; they have born the burden in the heat of the day, and what can I now do, or suffer for the Truth? am not I as one born out of due time?*

But living praises to the Lord, who in every Age is ready to reward the faithful, in what hour soever they labour in his Vineyard; and there is not one Member, though never so little, if in the body, nor Instrument, though never so weak, if prepared of the Lord, but all needful and useful in their places, to the dressing of the Vineyard of the Lord, and for the plucking up of those hurtful weeds that cumber the tender Plants. And dear Friends, let this be done in Gods pure fear, and heavenly Wisdom, with a tender care over every weak Plant, that it may be nourished within good ground, that it may bring forth Fruit to Gods Glory; For *thereby saith he am I glorified; what ye bring forth much Fruit*. Then is the labour of love which the faithful bestow on answered, when the Plants prosper, and the Lord is glorified; so in this labour, as co-workers and fellow-helpers, Male and Female, for which we were raised up by the Lords Power, let us put our hands to the work, and none look at their own weakness, for the Lord hath been pleased with

touching the weightiness of the work, and the weakness of the Instrument he chooseth; and his Answer hath been in the bosom of such (i.e.) I have chosen the weak things to overthrow the strong, and mighty, and the foolish things to confound the Wisdom of the Wise, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, and it is the travail of my Spirit. That none that putteth their hand to the Plow may draw back, or be dismayed, whatsoever the opposition be, for living praises to our God; the time is come wherein he is pouring of his Spirit upon his Sons, and upon his Daughters, Servants and Hand-maids, and enduing them with his Heavenly Wisdom, and fitting and strengthening them, to perform every duty and service he hath called them unto, how feeble soever we have appeared to be. As he did the ancient *Jews*, when they had the walls of *Jerusalem* to build, though it was then said of them, what will these feeble *Jews* do? but mark what Courage they received from the Lord to carry on the work with one hand, and with the other hold their weapon and praises to the Lord; we have no cause to complain, for his ancient power hath been with us, thus far, and his Heavenly presence hath accompanied us hitherto, whereby we are encouraged to the work for which we are appointed, even to labour in the Lord, for the repairing of the waste places of *Jerusalem*, and making up of the breaches in *Sion*, whom the Lord is making, and about to make the praise of the whole Earth; for his Beauty must shine forth, that many seeing it may have their faces thitherwards, and beholding *Jerusalem's* glory, may desire to dwell within her walls.

And dear Friends, let us diligently view *Jerusalem*, that we may count her Towers, and mark well her Bulwarks, that we may tell it to generations to come, and that those who succeed our day, may have those Testimonies lift upon Record, what God hath done for us, and been unto us, that his Faithfulness may be declared from age to age, and from one generation to another. O praises, praises to our God for evermore, for he hath had regard to the low estate of his Hand-maids, and hath remembered our many tears, when we mourned apart for him as silly Doves without Mates, and he is visited with his love, & owned with his presence, which is better than life itself; yea he is the beloved of our Souls, his beauty is more comely; There is no Spot in him, he is Amiable in our eye, he is the chiefest of ten Thousand, there is none like unto him, nor worthy to be compared with him; he is our beloved, and he is our Friend, and hath given us cause to say, our lot is fallen in a good land, and that we have a large possession; yea let this song be sung as in the

kind of *Judah*, we have a strong City, Salvation hath God appointed for Walls and for Bulwarks, and will keep in perfect peace all those whose minds are staid upon him; but he will bring down those that dwell on high, yea the lofty he will lay low, but the way of the just is uprightness, the most upright doth weigh his paths, yea in the way of his Judgments have we waited for him, and the desire of our Souls hath been to his Name, and to the remembrance of it; yea with our Souls have we desired him in the Night season, and with our Spirits within us have we sought him early; for when his Judgments are in the Earth, then his Inhabitants learn Righteousness. O living Praises unto him who hath appeared in our age, and brought forth Judgment into victory, and ransomed, redeemed and raised by his ancient power, his own suffering Seed, which in every age hath found acceptance with him from the beginning, as was manifest in righteous *Abel*, *Enoch*, (and also *Noah* whom he preserved;) though he destroyed the old World: and though *Sodom* was destroyed, yet *Lot* escaped, by flying out of it and getting into *Zoar*. And dear Friends, it is upon me yet once more to entreat, if any there be in any measure guilty of any of those Evils for which the Lord is angry with this Nation, the land of our Nativity, that such by true Repentance, while mercy is proffered, would return and get out of the snare; for the Angel of the Lord hath warned, therefore linger not, but I praye out of every thing wherewith the Lord is displeased; for he is a holy God, and of pure eyes then to behold Iniquity, and without holiness none can come unto him: Therefore saith he, *be ye holy as I am holy*, So dear Friends, in this holy life let us fly unto the Name of the Lord, for it is our strong Tower, in which he will preserve the Righteous, until his indignation be over and past, for he is angry with this Nation, because of the many & gross evils which hath abounded in it, with the oppressions of his people, because of all which he is grieved, and is preparing as a man of war to cut down the workers of iniquity, and sweep the Nation of Evil doers, and will finish Sin, and put an end to transgression, and bring in everlasting Righteousness, that the knowledge of his glory may cover the Earth, as the waters cover the Seas; for he hath taken notice of his suffering Seed, and hath remembered the afflictions of *Joseph*, and will set his Seed and heritage free, and bring the prisoners out of the prison-house; for *Joseph* was born to answer the end for which he was appointed, (though he was afflicted from a Child) to be a Saviour and a preserver of much People; for the promises of the Lord to our father, faithful *Abraham*, stands sure for ever, who said, *in blessing I will bless thee,*
and

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and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of Heaven, and as the Sand on the Sea shore which cannot be numbered, in whose Seed also all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed. So dear Friends, in the blessed Seed let us daily wait upon the Lord; to feel its breathings, and travels, and wrestlings of the Almighty, for Sions sake; yea let those Spiritual Prayers ascend up unto him, which in every age is his delight, and avails much with him for Sions prosperity, and for Jerusalem's welfare; and not only so, but for all that have their faces Sion-wards, and desire to Inhabit within Jerusalem's walls; for good is the Lord, slow to anger and of great mercy, willing to shew kindness to all Sions well-wishers. And so dear Friends, let us give our Attendance in all heavenly obedience upon him, in his own pure life begotten and brought forth by him, that so by his own off-spring he may be honoured, and in that may sway the Righteous Scepter, and lift up his Standard, and display his Ensign, that the Nations of those that must be saved by him, may flock unto him, that so many there may be from the East and West, North and South, that may come to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to praise him in the beauty of holiness, unto whom all praises, honour and renown belongeth, and to him it is given and returned, faith my Soul.

Dear Friends, this hath long laid upon me from the Lord, but I would have hid my self, and have been as one unconcerned; but his hand was heavy upon me, and gave me no rest, until with many tears I cryed unto him that he would help me, and enable me to do my duty, and discharge my Conscience, and deliver his Message; and then I gave up, and in obedience found peace: and according to the ability he hath given me, and as he opened in my heart, have I delivered it, desiring it may be received in the same bowels of love in which it is given forth, and its end answered, which is only and alone that the Lords People may be preserved, and he ever all glorified who is God, worthy for ever and for ever, and for evermore.

From a Traveller in Spirit for Sions prosperity, and your true and loving Friend, in the universal and unchangeable love of our God, in which I bid you all farewell.

CATHARINE WHITTON.

